

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### *Welcoming & Prayer*

For nearly a half century, the Catholic Church in the United States has celebrated National Migration Week, which is an opportunity for the Church to reflect on the circumstances confronting migrants, including immigrants, refugees, children, and victims and survivors of human trafficking. The theme for National Migration Week 2019, “Building Communities of Welcome” draws attention to the fact that each of our families have a migration story, some recent and others in the distant past. Regardless of where we are and where we came from, we remain part of the human family and are called to live in solidarity with one another.

Unfortunately, in our contemporary culture we often fail to encounter migrants as persons, and instead look at them as unknown others, if we even notice them at all. We do not take the time to engage migrants in a meaningful way, as fellow children of God. During this National Migration Week, let us all take the opportunity to engage migrants as community members, neighbors, and friends.

### *Prayer Follows*

## **2. CAUSES AND FACTORS ON MIGRATION**

Archbishop Gomez in his homily in 2013 said that immigration is a human right test of our generation and a historical moment for America. He also said that we need to renew our country in the image of her founding promises of universal rights rooted in God, immigration is about renewing the soul of America.

This make a lot of sense, because this country was made by immigrants, right? So every time we see new blood coming in, the soul of the country is renewed.

Immigration in the US has become a very complex issue, and it is necessary to address it keeping in mind the human dignity of all, especially when they are refugees who are seeking refuge and a better life. Immigrants and refugees have various reasons why they want to come to the US: many flee persecution and exploitation, some hope to reunite with family members already living in the US, or to find work that will provide support and a just way of life for their families back home. Our broken immigration system has led to undocumented people living in this country, working jobs and raising their families in fear of deportation.

“Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity. They are children, women and men who leave or are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all for being more.”

Pope Francis, World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014

Migration is a never-ending reality, it is part of human history, and in order to address it in the best manner possible, it is very helpful to understand the root cause of global migration. In the context of migration we need to understand some factors, and these are both push and pull factors, with push factors being reasons why people would want to leave their home country, and pull factors being reasons why people would want to come to a new country. There are basically four push and pull factors that determine the decision made by a person, and that decision made by a person, can be connected to any of these factors: economic, environmental, social and political.

### *Safety Factors*

Many times people migrate because of persecution and discrimination based on nationality, race, religion, political beliefs, or membership status in a particular social group. Danger can be imposed upon individuals by something formal, like war, or informal, such as widespread gang activity.

### *Economic Factors*

Whether permanent or seasonal, in general, it is believed that in economic migration, people move from poorer developing areas into richer areas, where wages are higher and more jobs are available. It is also common for people from rural areas to move to more competitive urban areas in order to find more opportunities. This is the case with Mexican migration into the US, which portrays the importance of both push and pull factors in economic migration. All throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, seasonal Mexican laborers have cross the border in search of work in the US agricultural industry, as the economic state of Mexico did not match the economic prosperity found in US. In the 21 century however, Mexican migration slowed down significantly, and after the US recession in 2009, economic migration from Mexico to the US began to decline.

### *Environmental Factors*

Migration caused by environmental factors is increasingly involuntary. Environmental factors cause displacement, or the forced movement of people by social or environmental factors. Crop failure for example, often results in both food scarcity and a drop in agricultural jobs, prompting people to move to a place with better job opportunities and

climate. Pollution of water, air and soil, in both urban and rural settings, can also create a serious health risk to locals, forcing them to look for a better life for themselves and their children.

Devastating natural disasters such as tsunamis, hurricanes, and earthquakes are environmental factors. For instance, you probably all remember the deadly earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010, claiming the lives of over 90,000 people, and displacing over 1.5 million others.

### *Social Factors*

Social factors motivating migration grow from the human needs and desires to achieve a better quality of life. Migrants often move to ensure better opportunities for themselves or their family, like sending their children to a better, safer school or finding a job that would have not only a sufficient salary, but also important benefits and career growth prospects. In terms of education, the United States graduate programs have been a particularly strong attraction for young, talented individuals around the world. Individuals can also migrate in search of services, such as life-saving surgery and medical treatment that are inaccessible in their home area.

## **3. CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES OF MIGRATION**

Our approach to migration, as Catholics, is rooted in the gospel and in the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching. A recent example of this teaching is in (*Strangers No Longer Together on the Journey of Hope*) this is a pastoral letter concerning migration, from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the USCCB.

### ***I. Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland***

All persons have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, and social opportunities to live in dignity and achieve a good life, a full life through the use of their God-giving gifts. In this context, work that provides a just, living wage is a basic human need.

### ***II. Person have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families***

The church recognizes that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive, and sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.

### III. *Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders*

The church recognizes the right of sovereign nations to control their territories and their borders. However wealthier nations, which have the ability to better protect and feed their residents, have a strong obligation to accommodate migration flows.

### IV. *Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection*

Those who flee wars and persecution should be protected by the global community. This requires, at a minimum, that migrants have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration, and to have their claims fully considered by a competent authority.

### V. *The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.*

Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. Often they are subject to punitive laws and harsh treatment by enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.

## 4. CONCLUSION AND CLOSING

All of us in this world are subject to follow a series of laws that keeps an order in society, and this is a good thing. However, there is also a law that goes beyond our human civil laws, and that is the moral law. This law was scripted by God in our hearts, and was affirmed by the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. And that is why beyond the civil laws, we Catholics also follow the moral principles of God. That's what makes us Catholics, that's what makes us followers of Christ.

Do you know what is the biggest thing that abortion and migration share in common? Neither one of the victims can make their own decisions. This country is the mother of migrants, and this mother nation can give the opportunity of a dignified life to its children, or deny it. To be pro-life is to defend life from the moment of its conception, until natural death. So, if I feel that I am pro-life because I am against abortion, but I am also against migration, I am really not pro-life. This appears to be two different things, but it is really one thing, and we cannot be selective and split it into two different things. Not when we are Catholic Christians.

*Petitions, closing prayer and blessing*

*Comments and questions?*